

The truth no one wanted you to hear

THE WINTERMOOR

THE NIGHT HOUSE FILES

LIGHTS



Dan Smith

Illustrated by Luke Brookes

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CLASSIFIED

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For the believers



The Night House Files

Officially, the Night House does not exist. But it is real. It is an old and secret organisation that investigates the truth behind strange events around the world; events that include the paranormal, the extra-terrestrial and the bizarre. Events that governments do not want you to know about. The findings of these investigations are filed and kept safe by a mysterious person known only as the Nightwatchman. Once a year, the Nightwatchman delivers a file to me. My job is to turn the contents of the file into a story so that you can know the truth. That is the Nightwatchman's wish, and I dare not disobey.

The following story is taken from File ET339: the Wintermoor Lights.

Everything you are about to read is true. The names of people and places have been altered to protect the innocent.

News article taken from the SATURDAY GAZETTE,

dated 8th December 1984

What is wrong with the children?

On Friday this week, a dozen children failed to turn up for lessons at Wintermoor Comprehensive School. All of the children were in the Third Form, and most had never missed a day of school.

The mystery deepened when the school contacted the parents of the missing children only to be told that they had all set off as usual that morning.

A local resident describes the moment he found one of the children wandering along Reacher's Lane.

"I almost ran her over," Dave Johnson recalls. "I stopped to see if she was all right, but she just stared at me and babbled about being 'chosen' or something. Then she sort of snapped out of it and walked off like nothing had happened. Honestly, what is wrong with children these days?"

After a police search, all of the missing children were found unharmed in different locations around Wintermoor. According to reports, the children were behaving strangely when found. They seemed to be in a trance, and several of them were muttering incoherently.

A teacher from Wintermoor Comprehensive who wishes to remain anonymous said: "It's some kind of prank. It has to be. Some of the children even claim to have seen 'lights' in the sky over Wintermoor. I blame TV. They watch far too much rubbish these days."

Two Weeks Earlier

Saturday, 24th November 1984

Some stories are easy to tell. When I know exactly where to begin and exactly where to end. But this is not one of those stories. I have spent many hours staring out of my window, trying to decide how and when to begin. Forty years ago? Fifty? A *hundred*? Perhaps even longer than that. But 1984 is when everything came to a head in Wintermoor. It's the year that everyone remembers, even though it's the year they all want to forget. It's the year of the tragedy, so that's when I'll begin.

November 1984. When the lights came.

Zoe Bishop, fourteen years old, was the first to

see one. She had just come home from early morning swim training. It was still dark when her mum pulled onto the drive and switched off the car engine.

“We’re home,” she said, nudging Zoe, who was dozing in the passenger seat.

Beyond the warmth of the car interior, the pavements glistened with frost. A smattering of lonely snowflakes drifted into the halo of a streetlamp.

Zoe blinked hard and rubbed her eyes before opening the door and climbing out of the car. The cold air hit her straight away.

“Come on, darling – let’s get you inside before you catch your death,” her mum said.

Zoe turned her face to the clear sky, feeling the gentle touch of the snowflakes. And that was when she spotted the light hovering over the woods north of town. About a mile away. It was small and faint, but Zoe was transfixed. At first, she thought it was a star, but then she realised it was moving. Travelling quickly in a straight line towards her.



Zoe was aware of her mum walking up the path to the front door, jangling her keys. Zoe wanted to join her, to go inside where it was warm, but the light held her gaze, and she couldn't look away.

It approached over the roofs of the houses until it was directly above the place where Zoe was standing. Then it came to a sudden stop.

Zoe tipped her head right back to look up at it. Snowflakes settled on her eyeballs and melted there, but she didn't blink. She could see it clearly now, just a few metres above her. No larger than her fist, the ball of light twisted and rippled like living water. It floated in the air, impossible and mesmerising, pulsing all colours at once as it began to expand and contract in time with her breathing.

Zoe watched the light, transfixed, for what seemed like a long time, then it dropped towards her and disappeared.

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Interview with: Tara Fisher**Date: Friday, 9th January 1987**

The following is taken from an interview with Tara Fisher, former best friend of Zoe Bishop, which took place two years after the incident at Wintermoor.

TARA FISHER: That's what Zoe told us about seeing the light. It was Saturday, and we were in Flynn's on the high street having hot chocolate. It's all in my diary. There was me, Jasmine and Dennis - whose real name was David. David Takagi. We called him Dennis cos his hair stuck up like Dennis the Menace from *The Beano*. Anyway, Zoe told us she saw this light in the sky,

and Dennis got really into it. He read that weird magazine about monsters and UFOs and that. He was like, "It's aliens, or maybe ball lightning," but me and Jasmine just thought Zoe was winding us up. Like it was a joke or something. So we teased her a bit, and she got really whizzed off and stormed out. I'd never seen her that angry before ... except for maybe one time by the lake a couple of summers ago. When Jackie Chapman scratched her new Walkman. It was a proper Sony and everything. A red one. Jackie dropped it on the rocks so it got scratched and dented. Zoe didn't talk to her after that. At least, not until the lights came. Then everything changed.

NIGHT HOUSE AGENT: When did you next see Zoe?

TARA FISHER: Monday morning. She always met me outside my house. Then we'd walk to Dennis's, then the three of us walked to school.

NIGHT HOUSE AGENT: That would be Monday, 26th November. And how did Zoe seem?

TARA FISHER: Weird. Or different anyway. Like, she hardly said a word. And when she did, she was like a robot, you know? No expression. And then she did this weird thing on the crossing near school. The lights went red, so all the cars stopped and we went over, but when we were halfway across, Zoe stopped. Right in the middle of the road. And she wouldn't move. The lights went green, and the cars wanted to go, but Zoe just stood there. She was, like, staring. Eyes wide open. And she was mumbling something. Me and Dennis didn't know what to do at first. Then I sort of grabbed her arm and shook her, and she looked at me and growled. Actually growled. Like ... *grrrrr*. And it was scary cos I could tell she wasn't joking. She was sort of ... like an animal. Anyway, a man got out of his car and started shouting at us, and that's when Zoe blinked and it was like she was

Zoe again instead of ... I dunno ... whatever she was just before that. She looked at us all confused and said, "What's wrong with me?" then she zoned out again and just walked off as if nothing had happened.

NIGHT HOUSE AGENT: You said she was mumbling. Do you remember what she was saying?

TARA FISHER: Yeah, I do. She was saying the numbers.